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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0489
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 1885
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 8907
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 7145
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5109
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3279
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 5065
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 1342
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY 0600
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 4175
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 9472
RUEHB1/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 6773
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 1271
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 3716
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 000861

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INSB

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/01/2019
TAGS: PGOV PREL PREF PHUM PTER FAID MOPS CE
SUBJECT: TNA TO MEET WITH PRESIDENT RAJAPAKSA

REF: COLOMBO 740

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES JAMES R. MOORE. REASONS: 1.4 (B, D)

¶1. (C) On September 2, Media reports indicated that the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) would meet with President Rajapaksa on September 7. TNA leader R. Sampanthan, a Member of Parliament (MP), told PolStaff there were several issues they wished to discuss with the President. First was the need for early resettlement of the IDPs, and concerns among Tamils that the government was engineering a &Sinhalaization⁸ of the North and East through reconstruction, military deployment and associated colonization. Sampanthan said they also planned to discuss the restrictions on travel by Tamil MPs in the North and East and restrictions on their ability to visit the IDP camps. The TNA expected to discuss political reconciliation with the President and to determine what his plans were. They would also bring up the general problem of human rights violations.

¶2. (C) Sampanthan claimed that the TNA had always been willing to engage the President. He thought that this meeting was coming about now because the President saw that the TNA had wide support from Tamil voters, following the results of the Jaffna and especially Vavuniya local elections, and had realized that he must engage the TNA as a legitimate voice for Tamil voters.

COMMENT

¶3. (C) A meeting held by President Rajapaksa with the TNA is a step forward for him. In the past, many Sinhalese saw the TNA as little more than the political arm of the LTTE. The President likely intends this meeting to be seen as an important conciliatory step and, as such, will expect credit for this from the international community. It is unclear yet whether this meeting is simply a one-time event put on by the President for show, or if it is a harbinger of things to come. Rajapaksa clearly feels that the TNA has some sway with Tamil voters in the North and East, but it remains to be seen if the TNA is able to capitalize on this advantage or on the upcoming meeting on September 7.

MOORE